

The Subterranean Mythos: An Exhaustive Archaeological, Historical, and Geological Re-evaluation of the Roman Catacombs as Refuges from Persecution

Executive Summary

The popular imagination has long been captivated by the image of the Roman catacombs as a vast, secret subterranean metropolis where the early Christian community lived in permanent hiding to escape the relentless persecution of the Roman Empire. This narrative, solidified by 19th-century romantic literature and hagiographical tradition, posits that the construction of these underground networks was a defensive architectural strategy, designed to conceal the faithful from the eyes of the state. However, a comprehensive synthesis of modern archaeological data, geological surveys, Roman legal history, and contemporary literary sources reveals a reality that is both more complex and fundamentally different from the legend.

The consensus of contemporary scholarship establishes that the catacombs were not secret hideouts but public, legally sanctioned cemeteries. While they were utilized for distinctively Christian burial practices and funerary rites, there is no archaeological evidence to support the claim that they served as permanent dwellings or secret cities for the living. The geological environment of the catacombs—characterized by high humidity, poor ventilation, and the presence of decomposing bodies—rendered them physiologically uninhabitable for extended periods. Furthermore, the very architecture of the catacombs, specifically the presence of light shafts (*luminaria*) and the disposal of vast quantities of excavated tufa, made their location obvious to any observer on the surface.

This report demonstrates that the use of catacombs for fugitive purposes was an exceptionally rare and temporary improvisation during specific, short-lived crises—most notably the Valerian persecution of 257–258 AD—rather than a structural feature of early Christianity. By analyzing the specific case of Pope Sixtus II, the comparative evidence of Jewish catacombs, and the legal status of burial colleges (*collegia funeraticia*), this document dismantles the "hiding place" myth while affirming the site's genuine significance as a locus of early Christian identity, liturgical development, and occasional, perilous defiance.

1. The Historiography of a Legend: From Romanticism to Rigor

To fully grasp the divergence between the popular conception of the catacombs and the historical reality, one must first interrogate the intellectual genealogy of the "Church of the Catacombs" myth. The narrative of Christians living underground was not a product of ancient testimony but largely a construction of the Counter-Reformation and, more significantly, the 19th-century Romantic revival.

1.1 The Literary Construction of the Underground Church

The most potent vector for the myth of the catacombs as a permanent residence for persecuted Christians was Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman's 1854 novel, *Fabiola, or, the Church of the Catacombs*.¹ Written as a pious counter-narrative to secularism and Protestant critiques, *Fabiola* dramatized the Diocletianic persecution (303 AD) and depicted the catacombs as a "second Rome" where the faithful retreated entirely from the sunlit world.² In Wiseman's fictionalized account, the catacombs are described as secret labyrinths known only to the initiated, used to sustain a suppressed community in total isolation.³ Characters in the novel, such as the blind girl who navigates the tunnels by touch, reinforced the idea of a hidden, hermetic world accessible only to the faithful.³

This literary invention was not merely entertainment; it was reinforced by the apologetic needs of the 19th-century Catholic Church. Emerging from post-Napoleonic suppression and facing the challenges of Italian unification, the Church sought to emphasize the antiquity and resilience of its Roman roots. The catacombs became a physical symbol of a Church that could survive despite the hostility of the state.³ As a result, the distinction between "burial place" and "hiding place" was blurred in the popular imagination. The narrative suggested that the very construction of the catacombs was a response to persecution—a defensive architectural strategy intended to create a sanctuary for the living rather than a repository for the dead.⁵

1.2 The Distortion of the "Age of Martyrs"

The "myth" relies on a conflation of timelines. It collapses three centuries of distinct history into a single monolithic "Age of Martyrs." It assumes that the persecution of Christians was constant from Nero (64 AD) to Constantine (313 AD), necessitating a permanent underground existence. Historical scrutiny, however, shows that persecution was sporadic, localized, and often separated by decades of relative peace, known as the *Little Peace of the Church*.⁶

For example, the period following the persecution of Valerian (ended 260 AD) until the Great Persecution of Diocletian (began 303 AD) was a time of relative tolerance, lasting over forty years.⁷ During these peaceful interludes, Christians rose to high positions in the imperial administration and built visible surface churches. There would have been no need for

Christians to hide during these decades, rendering the "underground city" hypothesis functionally unnecessary for much of the period in question. The "hiding" narrative fails to account for these long periods of integration and visibility, preferring a dramatic, continuous struggle that the archaeological record does not support.⁶

1.3 The Rediscovery and Reinterpretation

The catacombs were largely forgotten by the Middle Ages, save for the shrines of major martyrs. Their systematic exploration began with Antonio Bosio in the late 16th century, whose posthumous work *Roma Sotterranea* (1632) earned him the title "Columbus of the Catacombs".⁶ However, Bosio's work was often interpreted through the lens of Counter-Reformation piety, which sought to link the Roman Church directly to the martyrs to refute Protestant claims of corruption.

This tendency was amplified in the 19th century by Giovanni Battista de Rossi, the father of modern Christian archaeology. While De Rossi was a rigorous scientist who utilized ancient itineraries and epigraphy to locate lost tombs, his interpretations were occasionally colored by the hagiographical traditions of his time.¹¹ For instance, his reconstruction of the "Crypt of the Popes" in the Catacomb of Callixtus was a masterpiece of archaeology, yet it was also a deliberate crafting of a "mnemotopia"—a place of memory designed to serve the contemporary Church's narrative of continuity and apostolic succession.¹¹ The desire to find physical evidence of the heroic age of martyrs often led to an overemphasis on persecution in the interpretation of ambiguous archaeological data.

2. Geological and Architectural Realities: The Impossibility of Secrecy

The most formidable argument against the catacombs serving as secret hideouts is physical. The sheer scale, engineering requirements, and environmental conditions of the catacombs preclude their use as clandestine refuges.

2.1 The Geological Substrate: Tufa and Engineering

The existence of the catacombs is predicated on the specific geology of the Roman Campagna, which is dominated by tufa—a soft, volcanic rock that hardens upon exposure to air.⁹ This material allowed for the excavation of complex, multi-level galleries. However, the excavation of the Roman catacombs was a massive industrial undertaking, not a covert operation. The subterranean networks span approximately 150 to 170 kilometers of tunnels.⁶ The excavation of such galleries generated thousands of tons of spoil.

The primary logistical challenge of tunneling is the removal of displaced earth. For the

catacombs to remain secret, the excavators would have needed a way to covertly dispose of mountains of debris. In reality, the *fossores* (professional diggers) were a recognized guild of laborers.⁹ The spoil was often dumped nearby or used in local construction, creating visible evidence of excavation activity on the surface. The noise, dust, and presence of work crews would have been impossible to conceal from Roman authorities, particularly given that the entrances were often located on major public roads like the Via Appia and Via Salaria.⁹

2.2 The *Luminaria*: Beacons of Location

A critical architectural feature of the catacombs completely undermines the theory of secrecy: the *luminaria* (light shafts). To make the subterranean galleries navigable and to provide ventilation, the builders pierced the roofs of the tunnels with vertical shafts reaching the surface.¹² These shafts were not accidental cracks but engineered features, often square or circular in section, lined with masonry, and reaching down to the second or lower stories.¹⁵

These shafts served two vital functions that would have betrayed the location of any "secret" population:

1. **Illumination:** They allowed sunlight to penetrate the upper levels of the catacombs, guiding visitors and workers. St. Jerome, writing in the 4th century, explicitly mentions the "little light admitted from above" that relieved the darkness.¹⁵
2. **Ventilation:** They allowed for the circulation of air, essential in a space filled with decomposing bodies.¹²

From the surface, these shafts would have been visible as chimney-like structures, mounds, or grated openings in the fields and gardens surrounding the city.¹⁶ Any Roman patrol or passerby would have easily identified the location of the galleries below. The existence of *luminaria* is architectural proof that the Christians did not intend these spaces to be hidden from the eyes of the state.⁵ The "secret" entrances described in novels are contradicted by the monumental portals found at sites like the Catacomb of St. Domitilla, which faced public roads.⁵

2.3 Environmental Hostility to Habitation

Archaeological studies of the microclimate within the catacombs demonstrate that they were physiologically uninhabitable for long durations. Modern environmental monitoring in the catacombs reveals a stable but hostile environment.

- **Humidity and Temperature:** The catacombs maintain a constant temperature (around 14–17°C) but suffer from extremely high humidity, consistently recording levels between 96% and 100%.¹⁸ Such levels of saturation make thermoregulation difficult and promote the growth of molds and bacteria.
- **Pathogens and Decomposition:** These were active cemeteries. During the height of their use, thousands of bodies were in various stages of decomposition. The air would

have been thick with the stench of death, despite the use of lime and aromatics to mitigate the odor.¹² The risk of disease transmission in such a confined, damp space would have been astronomical for a living population.

- **Radon Gas:** Modern analysis indicates the accumulation of radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas, in poorly ventilated sections of the catacombs.²⁰ While ancient peoples would have been unaware of the specific chemical danger of radon, the stifling air quality and the "bad air" (*malaria*) were well-known concepts in Roman medicine.

The romantic notion of families living, sleeping, and eating in these damp, corpse-filled corridors is contradicted by the biological reality of the space. While brief visits for burial rites or memorial meals were common, sustaining a living population in such an environment would have been physically impossible and hygienically catastrophic.¹⁴ The "benches" found in the *cubicula* were for the *refrigerium* (funeral meal), not for sleeping.⁹

3. Legal Status: The Catacombs as Public Institutions

The myth of the catacombs relies on the assumption that Christianity was a banned, underground organization with no legal standing. While Christianity was indeed illegal at various times, the Christians utilized specific loopholes in Roman law to own and operate cemeteries openly. The legal framework of the Roman Empire was rigorous, and burial rights were among the most protected.

3.1 The *Lex Duodecim Tabularum* and *Extra Muros*

Roman law, codified in the Twelve Tables (c. 450 BC), strictly forbade burial within the city walls (*hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito*) for sanitary and religious reasons.⁶ This necessitated that all cemeteries—Pagan, Jewish, and Christian—be located outside the city boundaries (*extra muros*), typically along the major consular roads leading out of Rome.

The location of the catacombs was dictated by this law and by geology, not by a desire for secrecy.⁹ Christians were following the same zoning laws as their pagan neighbors. The catacombs were often situated adjacent to pagan necropolises or even shared the same general grounds. For example, the Catacomb of Domitilla began with the private hypogeum of a wealthy family and expanded into a community cemetery.²² This adjacency made them part of the public funerary landscape.²³

3.2 *Collegia Funeraticia*: The Legal Loophole

How could a persecuted sect own vast tracts of land? The answer lies in the Roman institution of *collegia funeraticia* (burial clubs). Roman law was generally suspicious of voluntary associations (*hetaeriae*), fearing they could become sources of political sedition. However, the state made a specific exception for burial societies, which were permitted to collect monthly

dues to ensure a proper funeral for their members, particularly among the poor and slaves.²⁴

It is widely held by legal historians that the early Church operated as a *collegium funeraticium* (or *collegium religionis causa*) in the eyes of the state during the 3rd century. This status allowed the Church to legally own the property above and below ground.⁹ To function as a burial club, the group had to be registered. The authorities possessed lists of members and the locations of their properties. Far from hiding the catacombs, the Christians likely registered them to ensure they were protected by the strict Roman laws against tomb violation (*violatio sepulchri*), which carried heavy penalties.⁵

3.3 The Organization of the *Fossores*

The excavation and management of these sites were highly organized. By the time of Pope Zephyrinus (199–217 AD), the administration of the cemeteries was a major logistical operation entrusted to his deacon, Callixtus.²⁸ The *fossores* (diggers) were not secretive volunteers but professional laborers who sold grave plots (*loculi*) and managed the expansion of the galleries. Their trade tools are often depicted in catacomb frescoes (picks, lamps), indicating a pride in their profession rather than a clandestine existence.⁹ The sheer economic scale of buying land, hiring diggers, and managing thousands of burials implies a public, corporate entity rather than a hidden cell of fugitives.

4. The Jewish Catacombs: A Comparative Control

To further dismantle the "persecution" theory, one must examine the Jewish catacombs of Rome. These sites serve as a crucial historical control group, demonstrating that subterranean burial was a cultural preference rather than a defensive necessity.

4.1 Parallel Development and Structure

There are six known Jewish catacombs in Rome, including the prominent sites at Vigna Randanini and Villa Torlonia.¹⁷ These catacombs share the exact same architectural morphology as the Christian ones: narrow galleries (*ambulacra*), wall niches for bodies (*loculi*), and painted chambers (*cubicula*).¹⁷

- **Chronology:** Radiocarbon dating and epigraphic evidence suggest that Jewish catacombs were in use as early as the 1st century AD, potentially predating the major Christian complexes.²³
- **Decoration:** They are decorated with distinctively Jewish iconography, such as the Menorah, the Ark of the Covenant, and the lulav, alongside pagan motifs like peacocks, demonstrating a degree of cultural integration.¹⁷

4.2 Absence of Persecution Narrative

Critically, there is no historical tradition or scholarly argument suggesting that the Jewish community of Rome lived in their catacombs to escape persecution. While Jews faced sporadic hostility (such as the expulsion under Claudius), they were generally a recognized and legal religion (*religio licita*) in the Empire.³² If the Jewish community built and utilized catacombs without the motive of hiding from persecution, the Christian adoption of the same architectural form is best explained by shared cultural and geological factors—specifically, the influence of Jewish burial customs (inhumation vs. pagan cremation) and the availability of tufa—rather than by the specific need to hide from Roman soldiers.¹⁷

The Jewish evidence confirms that the catacomb was a solution to the problem of "space and sanctity," not "safety and secrecy."

5. Chronology of Usage: When were they built and used?

To address the query regarding "what years" the catacombs were utilized, we must establish a precise archaeological timeline that distinguishes between *burial usage* and the mythical *refuge usage*.

5.1 The Second Century: Origins (c. 150–200 AD)

The earliest Christian excavations date to the mid-to-late 2nd century AD.⁶ Before this, Christians were buried in surface cemeteries mixed with pagans.

- **Private Origins:** Initial Christian burials were often in private hypogea owned by wealthy patrons, such as the *Hypogeum of the Acilii Glabrio* in the Catacomb of Priscilla or the *Crypt of Lucina* in Callixtus. These were extensions of private property rights, not communal secret hiding spots.³³ The inscriptions from this period are often brief and indistinguishable from pagan ones, save for the occasional "Fish" or anchor symbol.⁹

5.2 The Third Century: Expansion and The "Golden Age" (c. 200–300 AD)

This period marks the explosion of catacomb construction. Under Pope Callixtus I (c. 217 AD), the Church began to centrally manage burial grounds, creating the vast complexes we see today.²⁹

- **Demographic Growth:** The expansion correlates with the exponential growth of the Christian population in Rome, which reached perhaps 30,000–50,000 by the mid-3rd century.³⁶ The catacombs grew to accommodate the dead, not to hide the living.
- **Persecution Context:** This century saw the Decian (250 AD) and Valerian (257 AD) persecutions. It is in this specific window that the "grain of truth" regarding the use of

catacombs for *refuge of worship* (not habitation) appears.

5.3 The Fourth Century and Beyond: Monumentalization (c. 313–500 AD)

Following the Peace of the Church (Edict of Milan, 313 AD), the catacombs were not abandoned but transformed.

- **Pilgrimage Sites:** Pope Damasus I (366–384 AD) monumentalized the tombs of the martyrs, adding marble inscriptions, staircases, and lighting to facilitate pilgrimage.¹¹ This was an era of "archaeological" recovery for the Church itself, as it sought to honor its past.
- **Decline:** By the 5th century, burials began to move to surface basilicas and cemeteries within the city as the old laws relaxed. The catacombs were gradually abandoned as active cemeteries but remained shrines until the 8th and 9th centuries, when the relics were transferred to city churches for protection against barbarian looting.²¹

6. The Grain of Truth: The Valerian Persecution (257–258 AD)

While the idea of catacombs as permanent dwellings is a myth, the notion that they were sites of refuge for *worship* during specific moments of crisis is grounded in historical fact. The primary evidence for this comes from the persecution under Emperor Valerian.

6.1 The Edict of 257 AD

In 257 AD, Emperor Valerian issued an edict that fundamentally changed the legal landscape for Christians. Unlike previous persecutions that targeted individuals, Valerian targeted the institution and its property.

- **Confiscation of Cemeteries:** The edict specifically forbade Christians from holding assemblies and from entering "the places called cemeteries" (*cemeteria*).²⁹
- **Implication:** This decree proves two things:
 1. The Roman authorities knew exactly where the cemeteries were (debunking the secrecy myth).
 2. The authorities knew Christians used these places for assembly and liturgy.

6.2 The Martyrdom of Pope Sixtus II (258 AD)

The most pivotal event connecting persecution to the catacombs occurred on August 6, 258 AD. Pope Sixtus II was teaching or celebrating the liturgy in the **Catacomb of Callixtus** (specifically the *Area adstante* or a nearby chapel) in defiance of the imperial ban.³⁷

- **The Event:** Roman soldiers did not have to "hunt" for a secret lair; they simply went to

the known cemetery where the Pope was defying the law. They burst in and beheaded Sixtus II and four of his deacons (Januarius, Vincentius, Magnus, and Stephanus) while they were seated in their chairs.²⁹

- **Significance:** This historical event is the kernel of truth behind the legend. Christians *did* retreat to the catacombs to worship when surface churches were confiscated. However, they were caught immediately, proving the catacombs were ineffective as hiding places.³⁶ The fact that Sixtus was "teaching from the chair" implies a formal liturgical gathering, not a huddled mass of refugees living in the dark. Pope Damasus later honored this event with a famous inscription placed on Sixtus's tomb, describing the soldiers rushing in while the "Pastor" was teaching.³⁷

6.3 The *Triclia* and the Cult of Peter and Paul

During this same period of persecution (c. 258 AD), there is archaeological evidence of intense devotional activity at the **Catacomb of St. Sebastian** (historically called *ad catacumbas*). A structure known as the *Triclia* was used for funeral banquets (*refrigeria*).³⁶

- **Graffiti:** Hundreds of graffiti invocations to Peter and Paul have been found here, dating to this period.³⁶
- **Interpretation:** Scholars believe the relics of the apostles may have been temporarily moved here for safekeeping during the persecution, or that this became a substitute cult site when the Vatican and Ostian Way shrines were inaccessible. This reflects a strategic use of the catacombs for *safekeeping relics* and holding *rites*, but again, not for habitation.

7. Liturgy, Life, and Death: The True Function of the Catacombs

If they were not hiding places, what were they? The archaeological record paints a vivid picture of the catacombs as spaces of ritual, family, and art, utilized for specific social functions.

7.1 The *Refrigerium* (Funerary Meal)

The most common "living" activity in the catacombs was the *refrigerium* (refreshment). This was a commemorative meal held by the family at the tomb of the deceased on the day of burial and on anniversaries.⁹

- **Archaeological Evidence:** Stone benches and tables (*mensae*) carved out of tufa have been found in the cubicula (family burial chambers).⁹ In the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, paintings depict these banquets, showing attendees raising glasses in a toast.⁶

- **Syncretism:** This practice was not unique to Christians; it was a continuation of Roman pagan customs. The presence of wells and cisterns in the catacombs was primarily to provide water for these meals and for mixing with wine, not for sustaining a hidden population.⁹

7.2 Christian Art and Iconography

The art of the catacombs refutes the idea of a community paralyzed by fear. The frescoes, dating from the early 3rd century, depict themes of salvation, deliverance, and hope, rather than martyrdom or terror.

- **Key Motifs:** The Good Shepherd, Jonah and the Whale, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and the Raising of Lazarus.⁴⁴
- **Meaning:** These images celebrate the victory of life over death. The figure of the *Orans* (a woman in a posture of prayer) represents the soul in peace, not the Christian in hiding.⁹
- **Specific Discoveries:** In the **Catacomb of Priscilla**, we find the earliest known image of the Virgin Mary (early 3rd century), depicted with the prophet Balaam pointing to a star—a symbol of messianic prophecy, not persecution.⁴⁴ In the **Catacomb of Domitilla**, recent laser cleaning has revealed 4th-century frescoes depicting the grain trade and a "baker" in his cubicle, indicating that Christians were proud of their professions and fully integrated into the Roman economy.¹⁹ This is not the art of a marginalized, hidden sect, but of a confident community.
- **Absence of Passion Scenes:** Explicit depictions of martyrdom and the crucifixion are largely absent in the pre-Constantinian catacombs.⁴⁷ The community focused on the power of God to deliver, echoing a theology of resilience rather than a fixation on their victimization.

7.3 The Mystery of Mass Burials

While the catacombs were generally orderly, there are anomalies that point to crises. In the **Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus**, archaeologists discovered mass graves containing over 1,300 bodies, dating to the late 2nd or early 3rd century.⁴⁸

- **Analysis:** These bodies were wrapped in shrouds containing amber and gold threads, indicating they were not destitute. However, the simultaneous burial suggests a mass fatality event. While initially tempting to ascribe this to persecution, current scholarship leans towards a plague (possibly the Antonine Plague or the Plague of Cyprian).⁴⁸ The careful, albeit hasty, burial rites suggest the community was functioning and able to care for its dead even during a catastrophe, further reinforcing the role of the catacombs as a managed cemetery rather than a chaotic refuge.
-

8. Summary of Findings: Timeline and Usage

To summarize the complex history of the catacombs in relation to the "hiding" myth, the following table presents a chronological breakdown of their function.

Era	Usage of Catacombs	Relationship to Persecution
1st Century AD	Pre-Christian / Jewish. Limited/Non-existent for Christians. Jewish catacombs (e.g., Vigna Randanini) may begin usage.	Myth: Christians hiding from Nero (64 AD) in catacombs. Reality: No Christian catacombs existed yet; burials were likely in surface cemeteries.
2nd Century AD	Origins. Excavation begins (c. 150 AD). Private hypogea (e.g., Priscilla).	Reality: Burial space scarcity and cultural shift to inhumation drive construction. No evidence of hiding; burials are extensions of private property.
3rd Century AD	Peak Expansion. Church administration (Callixtus). Mass burials in SS. Peter & Marcellinus.	Reality: Used for burial and <i>refrigerium</i> . Exception: 257–258 AD (Valerian) saw illicit <i>worship</i> and the martyrdom of Sixtus II at the site, proving they were not secret.
4th Century AD	Monumentalization. Post-Constantine (313 AD).	Reality: Sites become shrines/pilgrimage centers. Damasus I restores tombs and adds inscriptions. Laser-revealed frescoes (Domitilla) show economic integration.
5th–9th Century	Decline & Abandonment.	Legend: Possible temporary refuge from

	Relics moved to city.	Barbarian invasions (Goths/Vandals), later conflated by medieval writers with earlier Roman persecutions.
--	-----------------------	---

9. Conclusion

The answer to the user's query is that the utilization of Roman catacombs as secret hiding places to avoid persecution is **primarily a myth**, though it contains a singular, significant grain of historical truth.

There was no era in which the Christian community of Rome lived, slept, or conducted their daily lives in the catacombs. The geological conditions—high humidity, radon gas, and the stench of decomposition—were hostile to human habitation. The locations were publicly known, legally registered under the status of *collegia funeraticia*, and visibly marked on the surface by *luminaria* and excavation spoil. The timeline of catacomb construction (beginning mid-2nd century) does not align with the Neronian persecution (64 AD), and the periods of intense persecution (Decius, Valerian, Diocletian) were too short and sporadic to necessitate the construction of a permanent underground city.

However, the catacombs were not entirely divorced from the drama of persecution. During the specific years of **257 and 258 AD**, under the Emperor Valerian, Christians defied imperial edicts by gathering at these cemeteries to celebrate the Eucharist. They went there not because the sites were secret, but because they were sacred, and because their surface churches had been confiscated. The martyrdom of Pope Sixtus II in the Catacomb of Callixtus stands as the historical anchor for the legend—a moment where the "Church of the Catacombs" was real, not as a dwelling place, but as a place of defiant witness unto death.

Therefore, while the romantic image of a subterranean civilization is a fiction of the 19th century, the catacombs remain a testament to a community that, while not hiding, refused to be separated from its dead or its God, even in the face of state violence. The "secret city" is a legend; the "sacred city" of the dead is the reality.

Works cited

1. Fabiola (novel) - Wikipedia, accessed November 23, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabiola_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabiola_(novel))
2. Fabiola or The Church of the Catacombs by Cardinal Nicholas Patrick WISEMAN Part 1/2 | Audio Book - YouTube, accessed November 23, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXeDP6_-k_A
3. The catacombs of Rome, and their testimony relative to primitive Christianity -

Internet Archive, accessed November 23, 2025,

<https://dn790001.ca.archive.org/0/items/catacombsfromet00withuoft/catacombsfromet00withuoft.pdf>

4. The Project Gutenberg eBook of Fabiola, by Cardinal Wiseman., accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/62254/62254-h/62254-h.htm>
5. The Project Gutenberg ebook of The Catacombs of Rome, by W. H. Withrow., accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/47532/47532-h/47532-h.htm>
6. Catacombs of Rome - Wikipedia, accessed November 23, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catacombs_of_Rome
7. Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire - Wikipedia, accessed November 23, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians_in_the_Roman_Empire
8. On this day in AD 303 the so-called "Great Persecution" of Christians within the Roman Empire began - Mint Imperials - University of Nottingham Blogs, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/mintimperials/2016/02/24/on-this-day-in-ad-303-the-so-called-great-persecution-of-christians-within-the-roman-empire-began/>
9. In The Catacombs | From Jesus To Christ - The First Christians | FRONTLINE - PBS, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/catacombs.html>
10. Representing Material Evidence: The Catacombs in Print - JHI Blog, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.jhiblog.org/2016/03/28/representing-material-evidence-the-catacombs-in-print/>
11. De Rossi's Deception: Crafting the Crypt of the Popes (5.) - The Early Modern Invention of Late Antique Rome - Cambridge University Press, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/early-modern-invention-of-late-antique-rome/de-rossis-deception-crafting-the-crypt-of-the-popes/EBB1BD033D9E3D1A21EB98C5F81E0AB8>
12. Structure of the Catacombs in Rome, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.catacombsociety.org/the-structures-of-the-catacombs/>
13. The Roman Catacombs | In Search of Christian Origins, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://insearchofchristianorigins.com/the-roman-catacombs/>
14. The Roman Catacombs: The Labyrinthine City of the Dead - Popular Archeology, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://popular-archaeology.com/article/the-roman-catacombs-the-labyrinthine-city-of-the-dead/>
15. Luminare - CatholiCity.com, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.catholicity.com/encyclopedia/l/luminare.html>
16. A Visit To the Roman Catacombs - Project Gutenberg, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/71927/71927-h/71927-h.htm>
17. Jewish and Christian Catacombs in Rome - Bible Odyssey, accessed November 23, 2025,

- <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/jewish-and-christian-catacombs-in-rome/>
18. Assessing and facing the biodeteriogenic presence developed in the Roman Catacombs of Santi Marco, Marcelliano e Damaso, Italy - ResearchGate, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261874985_Assessing_and_facing_the_biodeteriogenic_presence_developed_in_the_Roman_Catacombs_of_Santi_Marco_Marcelliano_e_Damaso_Italy
 19. "BAKERS" CUBICLE IN THE ROMAN CATACOMBS OF SANTA DOMITILLA - ROME, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.lightforart.com/en/case-studies/bakers-cubicle-in-roman-catacombs-of-santa-domitilla-rome/>
 20. Monitoring radon concentration in roman catacombs: a long-term analysis across different geological settings - PubMed Central, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12296779/>
 21. Catacombs of Rome - Underground burial places, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.rome.net/catacombs-rome>
 22. Documentation and Research on the Roman Domitilla Catacomb, Based on Image Laser Scanning and 3D Model, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/530/1/03_05_zimmermann_et_al_domitilla.pdf
 23. Myths & Legends of the Christian Catacombs - Richard Carrier, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/17317>
 24. Burials in Ancient Rome - International Catacomb Society, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.catacombsociety.org/burials-in-ancient-rome/>
 25. Associations, Roman | Oxford Classical Dictionary, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://oxfordre.com/classics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-1695?p=emailA/bB5pg5GerpA&d=/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-1695>
 26. Roman funerary practices - Wikipedia, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_funerary_practices
 27. Christianity, The Poor, And The "Collegia": Identity And Distinction Between Christians And Pagans In The Early Church -- By: Jeremiah Mutie | Galaxie Software, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.galaxie.com/article/jets67-2-07>
 28. Christian Catacombs, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.catacombeditalia.va/content/archeologiasacra/en/christian-catacombs.html>
 29. The Humble Splendor of the First Witnesses: The Catacombs of Saint Callixtus in Rome, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/humble-splendor-of-the-first-witnesses-the-catacombs-of-saint-callixtus-in-rome-10694>
 30. Letter from Rome - Secrets of the Catacombs - Archaeology Magazine - January/February 2024, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://archaeology.org/issues/january-february-2024/letters-from/secrets-of-the-catacombs/>

31. As Above, So Below? Jewish Catacombs in the Eternal City - Death in the Ancient World, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://deathintheancientworld.wordpress.com/2018/05/15/as-above-so-below-jewish-catacombs-in-the-eternal-city/>
32. Theodor Mommsen and the collegia funeraticia - UMK, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://apcz.umk.pl/KLIO/article/download/48893/41361/175340>
33. A History of Rome Catacombs, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://darkrome.com/blog/Rome/rome-catacombs-history>
34. Catacomb of Callixtus - Wikipedia, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catacomb_of_Callixtus
35. Chapter 6: The Catacombs (#130759) - Bible Truth Publishers, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://bibletruthpublishers.com/chapter-6-the-catacombs/persecution-and-profession-a-short-sketch-of-early-church-history/unknown-author/lac130759-lb-22330-12124>
36. Catacomb | History, Architecture & Significance - Britannica, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/catacomb>
37. Pope Sixtus II - Wikipedia, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Sixtus_II
38. The Catacombs- Myth and Reality | What Next? - WordPress.com, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://maryloudriedger2.wordpress.com/2013/04/30/the-catacombs-myth-and-reality/>
39. St. Sixtus II and Companions (Martyrs) - Catholic Exchange, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://catholicexchange.com/saint-of-the-day/st-sixtus-ii-and-companions-martyrs/>
40. Aug 7 - St Sixtus II (pope 257-258) and his companions, martyrs - Catholicireland.net, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.catholicireland.net/saintoftheday/st-sixtus-ii-pope-257-258-and-his-companions-martyrs/>
41. Aug 7 – Pope St Sixtus II, d. 258 AD, Martyr | ADULT CATECHESIS & CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LITERACY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://soul-candy.info/2012/01/aug-7-pope-st-sixtus-ii-d-258-ad-martyr/>
42. (PDF) (In the name of God)) ((Catacombs of early Christians) - ResearchGate, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373092055_In_the_name_of_God_Catacombs_of_early_Christians
43. Cemeteries and catacombs (Chapter 28) - The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome, accessed November 23, 2025,
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-ancient-rome/cemeteries-and-catacombs/DF09EFA2D11E9F7A433117B0DA408CB8>
44. The Christian Catacombs, accessed November 23, 2025,
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_commissions/archeo/inglese/docu

[ments/rc_com_archeo_doc_20011010_cataccrist_en.html](#)

45. Ante pacem : archaeological evidence of church life before Constantine / Graydon F. Snyder. - Vanderbilt Library Catalog, accessed November 23, 2025, https://catalog.library.vanderbilt.edu/discovery/fulldisplay/alma991009492209703276/01VAN_INST:vanui
46. 1600-year-old Christian frescoes in Rome's catacombs uncovered - ArchaeoFeed, accessed November 23, 2025, <http://archaeofeed.com/2017/06/1600-year-old-christian-frescoes-in-romes-catacomb-uncovered/>
47. Before Constantine, After Joseph Smith | Graydon F. Snyder, Ante Pacem: Archeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine - Dialogue Journal, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/articles/before-constantine-after-joseph-smith-ante-pacem-archeological-evidence-of-church-life-before-constantine/>
48. Classical Corner: A Subterranean Surprise in the Roman Catacombs - Biblical Archaeology Society, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/post-biblical-period/classical-corner-subterranean-surprise-roman-catacombs/>
49. The “Plague of Cyprian”: A revised view of the origin and spread of a 3rd-c. CE pandemic | Journal of Roman Archaeology | Cambridge Core, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-roman-archaeology/article/plague-of-cyprian-a-revised-view-of-the-origin-and-spread-of-a-3rdc-ce-pandemic/4DD870D473D3DDB1DF0328CE2C7E3280>